

# Human Services

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

August 5, 2003

## Major themes:

- Children are safer.
- Families are stronger.
- Troubled kids are doing better.

## 1. Children are safer.

### a. Scored well in Independent reviews.

The Office of Services Review annually reviews and scores overall child status, measuring child safety, stability, permanence and well being. Nearly 92 percent of Utah cases reviewed last year had acceptable scores, and overall the scores are improving yearly.

### b. Created the Utah Foster Care Foundation

Utah was the first state in nation to create a foundation to help recruit, train and support foster parents. And the Foundation has been successful: In 1999, Utah had 944 licensed foster families; as of June 30, Utah has 1,132 licensed families. Overall, the Foundation has recruited and trained 2,578 families.

### c. Doubled the number of DCFS caseworkers.

This administration has nearly doubled the number of caseworkers in Utah since 1984, going from just over 300 to nearly 600 as of June 30.

### d. Shortened the amount of time children need to spend in foster care.

- A large backlog of children were in foster care when Leavitt took office in 1993. In 1995 and 1996 DCFS moved the children into permanent homes. It was a huge undertaking by DCFS, the courts and the attorneys general.
- If parental rights are terminated today, the child generally is adopted within 18 months.
- Approximately 64% of children removed from their parents eventually go back home or to other relatives. And the average stay in foster care is just under 13 months.

- e. **Equipped caseworkers with key technology tools**  
Caseworkers now use cell phones, computers, transcription service, etc. to increase their efficiency and ability to conduct work outside the office.
- f. **Developed a state of the art child welfare management information system (SAFE)** which allows better tracking of individual cases, serves as a work management tool for case workers by prompting them on activities to be performed and deadlines, and as an overall management tool for administration to increase accountability.
- g. **Increased the number of juvenile court judges, assistant attorneys general and guardians ad litem**  
The people assure all parties had the ability to respond to cases in a timely manner.

## 2. Families are stronger.

- a. **Launched welfare reform.**
  - In 1993, Utah successfully launched a welfare reform waiver program that was based on the goal of increasing family income through employment and child support collections and requirement that all recipients engage in self-sufficiency activities. Based on the success of Utah's system, Governor Leavitt helped convince Congress to turn authority to design and implement welfare programs back to the states with the passage of the 1996 welfare reform legislation.
- b. **Created the Department of Workforce Services.**
  - It became operational in 1997 to streamline the delivery of employment and training programs in Utah. It operates a system of "one-stop" employment centers statewide. It combined five separate state agencies into one department.
  - The employment centers offer an array of services including employment services, financial assistance, Food Stamps and training programs.
- c. **Reduced welfare caseloads.**
  - a. From 1993 to 2001, caseloads have reduced by 59%. Welfare caseloads stood at nearly 19,000 when Governor Leavitt took office. That number was reduced to 12,864 by January 1997, and by June 2001 the total had declined to an all-time low of 7,731. Caseloads started to turn back up in the fall of 2001 due to the economic downturn. The caseload as of May 2003 was 9,131.

**d. Moved families off of welfare.**

- Since 1996, 25,643 families have successfully left welfare with income from employment.
- Utah has been recognized for its success in welfare reform in many arenas including receipt of a **\$3.8 million TANF high performance bonus award** in 2002 for its success in moving TANF recipients into employment.

**e. Increased child support collections.**

- The Office of Recovery Services has increased child support collections from a total of \$58.8 million in FY'93 to \$140.7 million in FY'03 – an increase of 139%.
- Utah also has continued to meet and exceed all federal performance standards for child support and last year earned \$3.5 million in bonus incentive funds based on its performance.

### **3. Troubled kids are doing better.**

- **Genesis Work Program** a community based program, opened at the direction of Governor Leavitt.
- **Serious Youth Offender** legislation enacted in 1995 to expedite transfer of violent and chronic juvenile offenders to the jurisdiction of the adult courts and correctional system.
- **Sentencing guidelines** implemented for juvenile offenders aimed at reducing delinquency through application of earlier and more intensive sanctions.
- **Farmington Bay Youth Center** opened in 1995 as the first state-owned, privately run facility. This was followed in 1997 with the opening of the new 160-bed Salt Lake Valley Detention Center also publicly owned and privately operated.